

J'Accuse... ! Open letter to The Rt Hon David Cameron, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom : TERRORISM, WAR AND DAESH.

Mr. Prime Minister,

J'Accuse...

GEORGE W. BUSH, TONY BLAIR, NICOLAS SARKOZY, FRANCOIS HOLLANDE : SPIN, LIES, HYPOCRISY, DUPERIE, CYNICAL INTERVENTIONISM, WORLD DOMINATION, FATAL IRRESPONSIBILITY.

I am French by birth, British by marriage, Roman of adoption, in heart and soul an Oriental woman. My love for the culture, the arts and the literature of the Near and Middle East led me to my arabist husband, who was for me a father figure and a mentor. He had studied Arabic at the Middle East Centre of Arabic Studies in Jerusalem with Sir Bertram Thomas, who became his mentor. He saw himself as *bridge between East and West*, and became the aide de camp of Sir Desmond Morton in Cairo. He had been for several months the youngest British officer during the war, fighting with the Rifle Brigade Green Jackets in the Western Desert. He was captured on Leros and imprisoned at Brunswick as a member of British Military Intelligence. After the war he carried on this activity for MI6 in the Middle East as a Public Relations officer for Irak Petroleum Company in Rome and in Beirut.

Mr. Prime Minister,

My love for Britain, for France and for the Middle East, for peace and justice, for the world's beauty and diversity as an artist and mystical poet, prompts me to address you today at this critical stage in French, British and European foreign politics.

Mr. Prime Minister,

DO NOT FALL IN THE TRAP !

As a teenager I had left France to flee the sectarian hate-filled attitudes inherited from the Second World War. I have always felt myself a European, a citizen of the world, my friends were already British, German and American. In the 90's I left England as I could not bear to see the damaging effects of Tony Blair's New Labour policy. I would not be witness

to the eradication of all the principles I so admired in Britain : democracy, integrity, respect of moral values and ancestral traditions, being decried, scorned and destroyed by a blind, cynical, vulgar materialism, which is a threat to the humanist foundations of our European society and culture.

For several weeks now, the former Prime Minister, in anticipation of the long-awaited Chilcot report, has been making contrite apologies for the illegal 2003 war in Iraq, seeking to exonerate himself of all responsibility for its disastrous consequences. Britain's choice to support George W. Bush's aggressive and controlling foreign politics, an anti-terrorist fight concealing more suspect geopolitical and economic interests, was made in 2001 when British troops joined the American forces in Afghanistan. Blair had then assured George Bush of his support against Saddam Hussein. The 2003 Iraq war was long planned. It only remained to present it under an acceptable form to the world, and more particularly to the British people. Alastair Campbell, spin-doctor extraordinary to the Prime Minister, cynically confessed having *sexed-up* the subject. He and his team worked for months to get public opinion on Tony Blair's side. Eventually they brought it all to a climax in producing the key argument to tip the balance in their favour : the presence of weapons of mass-destruction. The stage was set to push the decision to go to war through Parliament on the eve of the 13 March 2003 invasion, the biggest mistake in Britain's foreign policy since the 1956 Suez crisis. Tony Blair has shamelessly lied to Parliament and to the British people, playing on the fear of terrorism in using words deliberately inflammatory and fear-inducing. He told the enquiry commission on the Iraq War on the 29th of January 2010 *Saddam Hussein was a monster and I am convinced that he was a threat not only to the region but to the whole world*. In a memo addressed to George Bush dated 23rd March 2002 Colin Powell wrote *Blair is with us*, whereas he was perfidiously lying to the allies among them France, pretending to be engaged in diplomatic negotiations. The human and political cost of his lies and manipulations is enormous, the scale and gravity of the consequences at European and world level remain still to be fully assessed. Media communication had been misused and corrupted for propaganda purposes, terrorist groups, such as Daesh, follow now his deadly example.

As a result, the integrity of European leaders has been questioned and discredited for a long time. Blair has found a following in France with a certain Strauss-Khanist *gauche caviar*. The present Foreign Minister, Laurent Fabius, invited him to Paris : on March 24th 1998 Tony Blair introduced New Labour at the Assemblée Nationale as a *third way between socialism and liberalisme*, denouncing *ideology*. He certainly meant the moral principles of fairness and integrity expected from Heads of States elected democratically. The French right-wing was enthralled, Nicolas Sarkozy became his most devoted adept and disciple, inviting him as the guest of honour at the UMP National Council in 2008. Blair acknowledged it,

returning the compliment in Time Magazine the same year : *People can accuse him of acting from lack of political principle. They can just as easily say he is acting with a lack of party prejudice... Nicolas' reaching out to the U.S., under President Bush, was not expected except by those who knew him. But it has been effective. The U.S. sees him as an ally... He has put France on the map (sic)...* Sarkozy has been such a good pupil that his own home policy record can compare with the disastrous one of his mentor, denounced by Anglican bishops in the French magazine Marianne in 2009 : *In Great Britain the home policy of Tony Blair and his Finance Minister Gordon Brown based on the worship of almighty money, has intensified social exclusion and inequality. It has been an absolute moral, human and social disaster.* From 2007 to 2012 the French President promoted and practised the same pernicious neo-liberal and neo-conservative Blairiste system, with the same disastrous results. Sarkozy's own home policy record bears witness to this sorry state of affairs. Countless underprivileged French citizens, either by origin, and/or social class, have been marginalized and alienated. A violent resentment has built up as a result of the brutality of the system and of its inherent injustice ; many young people have thus become radicalized. This social divide has been exacerbated by sectarian and inflammatory speeches on the *national identity*. It has been further aggravated by media manipulation to excess of the politicians' every word and action. Sarkozy's blatant greed and corruption echoes his mentor's own - Tony Blair is the richest former Prime Minister in British history – together with the ardent wish of belonging to the exclusive club of the former Heads of States dubbed by the politico-economic American power. Now self-appointed *lecturer* the former French President, who does not speak a word of English and has nothing to say beside rehashed Blairism, is on the books of the American agency the Washington Speakers Bureau, together with Tony Blair, who recommended him. Sarkozy's fundamental perversity and its cynical amorality mean that the end justifies the means so long as it benefits him and his clique, to the detriment of any other good, be it national or international.

He left France divided and fragmented, tired of his scandals and excesses. His successor was elected President by default. Unfortunately François Hollande shares with Sarkozy the fatal French heritage of the May'68 Revolution. They both lack political vision and intellectual stature. They both suffer from moral inertia and a huge egocentricity. In the name of their sacrosanct liberty, they put their own personal ambitions and interests first forgetting those of the country. Hollande, a Normand petit-bourgeois displays a characteristically cautious narrow-minded peasant mentality. He is a small civil servant without vision nor imagination, worthy of Flaubert or Maupassant's novels. Yet he wants to emulate his predecessor, an unscrupulous histrionic cameleon, of hybrid origins, endowed with a souk-like Corsican mafia mentality. Hollande has adopted his stance and manipulation of the media, his hyper-activity concealing a dangerous lack

of ideology. Their shared scorn of conventions and traditional values have contributed to the desecration of the presidential function through a lack of personal discipline and gravitas in their behaviour. They have both contributed to the weakening and trivialization of the French political debate. Hollande, and his Prime Minister Manuel Vals, show off in adopting Sarkozy's martial stance and rhetoric for the same reason : to assert and secure their own power and conceal its inefficiency.

Sarkozy has played a perverse and dangerous game with the Middle Eastern Heads of States to secure his presidency. In December 2007 he received in Paris Mouammar Kadhafi, accused of complicity in terrorist attacks. The Libyan leader was given a grand ceremonious welcome during his five days visit. It was his reward for having financed Sarkozy's election campaign and delivered the Bulgarian nurses to Cecilia Sarkozy in July 2007, helped by Qatar's financial support. A Franco-Libyan cooperation and promises of juicy business contracts were also part of the deal. In 2011 when the Arab spring heralded the democratization of North Africa, the Near and Middle East, Nicolas Sarkozy saw there an opportunity of getting rid of an embarrassing ally who could endanger the credibility of his presidency. Tony Blair's emulator was a good pupil and surpassed his master in perfidy. He accomplished the tour-de-force in having his benefactor assassinated with the approval of the international community. Sarkozy's relationship with Bashar al Assad was as perverse and ambiguous. From 2008 to 2010 he courted him and received him at the Élysée under the pretext of the l'Union pour la Méditerranée project. His position was deliberately reversing France diplomatic anti-Syrian stance of his predecessor President Jacques Chirac. France's non-intervention politically and diplomatically in the Syrian home conflict in 2011 has contributed to an increase of the organized mass murdering of the population. It has also encouraged the rise of terrorist groups, Daesh in particular, and of their hold in the region.

Mr. Prime Minister,

J'Accuse...

Nicolas Sarkozy by action and by omission to have conceived and contributed to crimes against humanity in the pursuit of his own political and financial personal interests. His ignorance of Middle East politics, his incompetence and gullibility, together with his hysterical haste of showing himself a clever operator on the international stage, have contributed to the destabilization of the whole region. In shunning the counsel and advice of Foreign Office arabist experts, and following his own bravado policy, he must therefore bear a

heavy responsibility in the mass migration from Lybia and Syria. He has destroyed Syria's socio-economic structure - the most advanced and prosperous country in the region - bringing famine to the population and forcing it to exile, and opened the field to the local warlords with fatal consequences. In orchestrating the most disastrous military action in recent French history, he has furthered the internecine fights blazing now all over the Sahara, and encouraged the Islamic factions' rise and grip on the area. He deliberately left the situation in Syria fester, when France could have played an essential and determining role on the international diplomatic scene and saved thousands of lives. His irresponsible, incoherent and incompetent foreign policy is in great part responsible for the catastrophic mass migration in Europe. Desperate refugees die daily on the shores of the Mediterranean sea he pretended unify in a common vision and cooperation. Southern European countries with a fragile economy, namely Greece, Italy and Spain, bear alone the economic and social burden of receiving them on their territory with adequate humanitarian support structures. France cannot turn away from the cause and effect situation. France cannot ignore nor deny the moral and effective responsibility of actions engendered, and still perpetrated, as a direct result of President Sarkozy's policy.

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George W. Bush and Tony Blair of crimes against humanity, to have waged an unlawful war against Iraq, and under the fallacious pretext of an anti-terrorist fight to have destroyed the socio-economic structure of the country, in the process killing thousands of innocent civilians with their bombs. All in order to establish Western supremacy over the region and take hold of the important natural resources of energy. As previously in Afghanistan, the country has been devastated, leaving it open to internecine conflicts from which terrorist groups have emerged, DAESH in particular.

In human terms the Iraq war is catastrophic not only for the very high number of civilian casualties, but the intensive bombings have left behind a deadly heritage. The chemical and radioactive residues have polluted the soil and the water, causing leukaemia and cancer. Even the new-borns are contaminated with the disease and often show deformities. A highly sophisticated agrarian society had developed c. 5500 BC using irrigation canals and the wooden plough in this fertile country, a cradle of mankind. Western greed, barbarity and arrogance has eradicated this thousand-year-old heritage in a few years. George Bush's *shock of civilizations* is the most dreadful duplicity. It is an aggression against sovereign States in order to impose upon them Western materialism and consumer society. Outwardly aimed to bring democracy and modernity to the region, the real goal of this invasion was to get hold and exploit natural resources of energy in order to

to preserve a way of life no longer sustainable. It destroys the environment and threatens the survival of the planet. The Mediterranean sea is drying up, everyday the sands of the desert encroach upon arable lands. The fateful cycle of famines has already started, the Arab spring was one of its consequences. Democracy cannot be imposed from outside, it has to grow organically from within to last. It is the end result of a long inner mutation and of a conscious choice made by society.

The wars against Afghanistan and Iraq are part of a world domination plan inspired by the former French and British colonial empires. The plan is also inspired by a more sinister example, that of the Nazi regime. At the end of the Second World War, the United States seized the Nazis' secret scientific and technological research and used them to develop new weapons, including the atomic bomb. The Marshall Plan's dark and hidden face, of which the CIA, a surveillance structure derived from Military Intelligence, created the same year in 1947 is the motor nerve, is strangely similar to Hitler's dream of world domination. Washington has replaced Hitler's Germania, the Nazi capital city at the centre of world conceived by Albert Speer to replace Berlin. The Islamic State's avowed goal to achieve world domination displays the same megalomaniac madness than Hitler's and George Bush's dream. Here is the real *Axis of Evil*, which became the American President's leitmotiv from 2002 onwards in his martial rhetoric aiming to convert the whole world and rally it to his *crusade*. His neo-conservative manichean policy, brutal and simplistic, has created Daesh's venomous hydra. The fateful heritage carries on still. It shall not die out as long as conflicts are dealt with military force and not through political and diplomatic means.

J'Accuse...

François Hollande and Manuel Vals of emulating the fateful example of George W. Bush, Tony Blair and Nicolas Sarkozy. They are repeating the same scenario of an escalation in violence and destruction, which far from rendering France secure will endanger the country and its citizens further. This threat shall spread to all other countries in the European Union, and shall be fatal to the world's peace and political stability. They have blindly fallen in the crude trap of one-upmanship, whether in dealing with Daesh or in emulating the martial neo-conservative stance of their predecessors. They are using the same worn-out fear-inducing speeches, playing on people's anxieties in order to display their capacity in dealing with the situation, and preserving their majority in the forthcoming local elections. Was it necessary for Manuel Vals to summon the spectre of chemical and bacteriological warfare when the Parisian attacks of January 7 and November 13 were carried out with explosives and firearms ? But he wanted to outdo Nicolas Sarkozy in setting

out an American-style *Patriot Act* authorizing even more control and surveillance. Every single aspect of the lives of French citizens is already under minute scrutiny and the endless compiled files get lost in the heavy and slow-grinding bureaucratic apparatus, unable to find its way in the labyrinthine meanders of its own administration. Less paperwork and filing, and more coordination and efficiency, would be welcome, in particular in the field of surveillance, unable it seems, to detect potential terrorists on home ground.

Manuel Vals has the same disturbing gleam in his eyes as George Bush, Tony Blair and Nicolas Sarkozy. All those men are ruthlessly pursuing their own personal aims and ambitions with a determination close to fanaticism. Under the guise of demagogic speeches they are a real threat to world peace and belong to a fatal network. Far from being concerned with the national interests of their own country, they are used by powerful multinationals who manipulate their greed and ambition to their own ends. In 2007 Tony Blair was appointed special Peace envoy by the Quartet on the Middle East, an organization created in October 2001 by the representatives of the European Union, the United Nations, America and Russia, to bring support to the Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat in his efforts to curb the escalation of violence after the Second Intifada in 2000. This was a particular perverse appointment considering Tony Blair's past record, but it fitted in the logic of the American neo-conservatives' economic and political world domination plan.

The West, namely France, Great Britain and America, has a very heavy debt towards Palestine and the Palestinians since the 1917 Balfour Declaration. Territories in the Near and Middle East under Ottoman rule had been promised to the Arab populations under the agreements set out by the 1916 Hussein-McMahon correspondence. Yet the Balfour Declaration granted Palestine as a *home to the Jewish people* to the Zionist Organization created in Austria in 1896 in the face of the rise of antisemitism in Europe. The former Prime Minister Lloyd George told the Palestine Commission in 1937 that the decision had been made entirely *due to propagandist reasons* in order to obtain the support of the American President Woodrow Wilson's Zionist advisers to the allies of the Triple Entente : Britain, France and Russia. Britain and France had entered into a secret pact with the Sykes-Picot Agreement or Asia Minor Agreement, to share between them zones of influence in the Near and Middle East where oil resources already played a very important role. Palestine, under British mandate, was an important strategic place to access the Suez Canal. It should have become the terminal of Iraqi oil via Jordan. The Allies gained the support of the United States against Germany in the First World War at the expense of the Palestinians, who after the Second World War were for the second time robbed of their country and identity following the

Jewish exodus after the horrors of the Holocaust, to which Pétain's government had lent a helping hand in France.

The appointment in 2005 of James Wolfensohn, former chairman of the World Bank, as the first Envoy for Peace by the Quartet is very significant. The World Bank was created in 1944, at the same time as the International Monetary Fund, to loan money at a low rate of interest to developing countries and for capital programs. Both have their offices in Washington. France was the first country to benefit from its financial support in 1944, followed by many other countries under the Marshall Plan from 1947 onwards. Tony Blair was appointed by the Quartet despite Russia's objection the very day when he was forced to resign as Prime Minister and Member of Parliament on June 27th 2007, for his lies over the invasion of Iraq, and for not having requested a ceasefire during the 2006 Israeli war against Lebanon. On January 10th 2008, he was appointed Senior Adviser to the American Bank JP Morgan Chase. He has since built up and impressive business portfolio as a financial adviser worldwide, and become extremely wealthy. He has done so in walking over the corpses of the Afghans, the Iraqis, the Lebanese, the Palestinians, the British soldiers who died fighting, the British citizens who died in the London terrorist attacks in 2005. His money is the price of blood, of their blood, and should burn his fingers. The same accursed and lethal blood besmirches Nicolas Sarkozy's presidency and fortune. It is the blood shed by the Libyans, the Malians, the Syrians, the French soldiers, the refugees dead in the Mediterranean sea.

Blood has also been shed in Paris on the 13th of November attacks with 130 dead and 350 wounded. It is the blood of innocent victims, the blood of their killers, young French people like them, but radicalized in their anger against the existing system, against the social injustice of a materialist society they do not identify with. They see in it neither values nor ideals to motivate them. They feel abandoned, and in despair they become easy prey to extremist brainwashing. The terrorist attacks in London of July 7th 2005 with 52 dead and 700 wounded – I was in London then – were of the same ilk. Ken Livingston, the former Mayor of London, recently on the BBC has replied to the question of the British bombing Daesh in Syria : *Blair was told by the security services: « If you go into Iraq, we will be a target for terrorism »*. Britain has learnt the lesson and taken appropriate action. France has to do the same. François Hollande has fallen into the terrorists' trap in going to war in Mali. He is guilty of the same wrong as his predecessor Nicolas Sarkozy. He now repeats his deadly error in Syria and wants to draw once more the international community in an endless war.. French society must become aware of its own dysfunctions and shortcomings. Freedom of speech does not give a licence to deliberately provoking and offending particular groups of people at home or abroad. Blasphemy has never been a Republican virtue, but is a demonstration of a

lack of elevation in spirit. The sense of sacredness is inherent to all civilized societies, it makes man stand out from the beast. Even if one is heartlessly lacking in compassion, a certain civility in living together requires a certain respect of what is considered sacred by others. It is an elementary rule in civilized society. Outrageously tasteless schoolboy sense of humour, smacking of May' 68 hazing nights, cannot be tolerated any longer at this critical point when French society is threatened with implosion and civil war, and terrorism is global. This egocentric and immature attitude is a real danger for all, the November attacks are a follow-up of the January 2015 Charlie Hebdo shooting. However the magazine does not seem to have learnt the lesson. There is an unbearable indecency in the casual and overindulgent way of the French media towards certain subjects. Whether it be the obscene Charlie Hebdo's cartoons of the dead Syrian child drowned this September at Bodrum, on the very beach where many luckier holidaymakers spend their holidays in the sun. Or the Paris- Match October article on Nicolas Sarkozy's son, Louis, who, after the first terrorist attack of January 7th in Paris, posted on his Twitter account on April 11th some photographs of assault rifles: *This is the Stuff dreams are made of man...* No doubt the caption of this obscenity came from Carly Simon's 1987 song, rather than Shakespeare's Tempest, considering the youngster's boundless admiration for all things American. He lives in New York and has for ambition to become an American Marine. He is also a fervent believer, as is the Republican candidate Donald Trump, of civilian armed defense !

Mr. Prime Minister,
Do not fall in the trap !

The shedding of blood must stop. There are other ways and other means. Other voices are being heard, speaking of other things than hatred, war and violence. They bring a message of hope and renewal. In France, since the last terrorist attacks, some videos of the former French Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin, are watched non-stop on the social networks. One is a recent interview on the RTL channel, the other a 2014 clip of an appearance on the France 2 channel where he makes a very critical analysis of George Bush's interventionist policy in Iraq and of the consequences. He warns : to declare *France is at war is to play in the hands of the enemy. The trap which is set for us is the idea that we must go to war...War presupposes the conflict of two States, two armies... This is not the right way to go about it...Each time we go to war, we must fight yet another one to repair our incompetence. These terrorist attacks are for a major part the result of an historical process, increased by the interventions in Afghanistan, in Iraq, in Libya and elsewhere. They have all added fuel to the fire. We must draw the lessons from experience. For the last 10 years matters have not stopped getting worse in Libya, in Afghanistan, in Irak... We*

cannot win the war against terrorism because terrorism is an invisible hand, all the time in mutation, changeable and opportunist. It requires a capacity of thinking an action well beyond military action. We must become aware that this Islamic State, Daesh, we have created it ourselves for the largest part from war to war...There is a vicious cercle in which we have locked ourselves up. It is not only ineffective, it is dangerous...Today to go to war in this region, is to run the risk of uniting groups against us. How many more terrorists are we going to create?... It is high time that Western countries draw the lessons from Afghanistan. In 2001 there was one central focus of terrorism. Today more than fifteen exist. We have made them multiply, he adds, regretting emotional reactions in hasty decision-making. The first thing to do is always to respect international laq. Secondly one must not push the region into a new war, but we must make it assume it responsibilities...In Fance today there are 65 million of French citizens who want to change things. We must take in account this growing anger.

His words are a flash of intelligence, wisdom and clear-sightedness in the nether world of obscurantism and extremism, be it in the East or in the West. Since his historical speech against the Iraq war at the United Nations of February 14th 2003, like Gandhi, Dominique de Villepin has campaigned non-stop for the peaceful resolution of conflicts, always recommending anti-interventionist and non-violent solutions. His speech had galvanized nearly 10 MILLION people all over the world. They all gathered together spontaneously on February 15th 2003, demonstrating in more than 800 cities their wholehearted support for world peace and for France's commitment to world peace. It was the largest protest of its kind in history. Like many others, I was marching in the streets for the first time of my life. I was there in Hyde Park, feet in the mud, head wind-blown, under an icy drizzle. On the podium together with Bianca Jaegger, George Galloway, and Tariq Ali - who I was to meet later over a film project on the Nobel prize-winner for literature Naguib Mahfouz – the former Algerian President Ben Bella ended his speech with a resounding VIVE CHIRAC, VIVE LA FRANCE ! I wrote to Président Chirac to congratulate him and tell him I was proud of being French.

Dominique de Villepin's message is more than ever relevant considering the two terrorist attacks in France this year : *Today our country can show the way out of the military cul-de-sac, if we invent a new model of commitment based on historical facts, of people's aspirations and respect of national identity. Such is France's responsibility confronted with history...We are peacemakers not warmongers...The militarist, moralistic, occidentalist stance does not belong to the French tradition.. France must send a message of peace, of respect and of tolerance.*

The era of warmongers, of huge wealth built on the shedding of innocent blood, of the false prophets'spin and of America's world domination dream

is over. On May 27th 2015 Tony Blair was forced once more to resign his mission as the Peace Envoy to the Middle East. He was accused of having abused his UN diplomatic status to increase his address-book and his business turn-over in the region. His Faith Foundation is built on the same imposture, Tony Blair is still presumptuously betting on spin and slogan. He declared at its launch in May 2008, in the offices of the media group Time Warner in New York, that *idéalism becomes the new realism*, and that one of the Foundation's aims is *to counter extremism in all six leading religion*. The former British Prime Minister is once more accused by various critical observers to use his Foundation, with millions raised in donations, to further his wide and varied business interests, and to promote the American dream of a globalized political central power imposing one religion to the rest of the world. Chris Doyle, director of the Council for Arab-British Understanding declared : *There were perceived conflicts of interest... And increasingly senior Palestinian politicians to whom I have spoken did not have the confidence that Tony Blair was pushing the envelope to find peace or a way forward. Somebody else needs to be given a chance with a much improved mandate than Mr Blair had when he accepted the role.* Time has come for men and women of honour, integrity and generosity to stand up and carry on the torch. One must not forget the Palestine conflict in the fight against Daesh. The terrorist organization is indirectly an offshoot of the Palestinian situation which festers and poisons the whole region. It shall go on so long as a Palestinian state is not recognized by Israel and the Palestinians given back what is legitimately theirs : the right to enjoy in peace and freedom their land and national heritage.

Mr. Prime Minister

J'Accuse...

George W.Bush, Tony Blair and Nicolas Sarkozy of barbarity and iconoclasm . Through their interventionist policy they have fostered and contributed to the dilapidation, the looting and the destruction of the cultural national heritage, tangible and intangible, in Afghanistan, in Iraq, in Lebanon, in Syria and in Libya. What allied fighting and bombing had not destroyed in Iraq and Syria, Daesh is doing so. Archeological sites and historical monuments, priceless testimonies of thousand-years-old civilizations have forever disappeared. Mankind's collective memory, our own culture, our spirituality born in the Near and Middle East, are all under attack and impoverished. The art of writing was born in Sumer c. 3100 BC. Cuneiform clay tablets are a precious record of the administrative, commercial, political, religious and artistic life of the first city-states founded c. 3400 BC. The myths and customs of these highly sophisticated people have contributed to our own evolution. Their influence is still extant in our culture, as is the heritage of the Ancient Egyptians, the Greeks, the Celts and the Romans. From Babylone has come down to us

one of the oldest code of law in the world. The region was at the crossroad of all the great civilizations in Antiquity. Palestine, Cisjordan, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Libya are the precious witnesses of a very ancient past. It finds an echo in our heart and soul, the loss of this heritage is immeasurable. During the Iraq war, Dr. Irving Finkel, keeper of the Assyrian and Mesopotamian antiquities department at the British Museum, denounced the systematic looting of archeological sites and of Bagdad National Museum : *It was predictable and could have been avoided.* President Jacques Chirac called it on April 16, 2003 *a crime against humanity.* Daesh's traffic of antiquities, a source of income as important as the oil business, carries on the same policy of exploitation of the archeological, artistic and cultural heritage as those of the looters in the wake of the American and British's invasion. Libya and Syria have now become their preys. How not to feel outraged and shed tears of blood at this immense loss, this barbaric destruction of a collective memory ? A priceless tangible and intangible heritage created by generations of men is forever gone. Their children parked in refugees camps shall never be able to enjoy it. What shall their future be when their legitimate heritage has been stolen from them, when the continuity of their tradition, which is their own identity, has been destroyed ? The first musical notation was inscribed on a clay tablet in Syria c.1400 BC. Our musical instruments echo their Oriental ancestors. The love poems and songs of our minstrels, whether medieval or modern, are inspired by the poets from Bagdad and Cordoba. Our knowledge of the natural sciences, physics and chemistry, our mathematics, our medicine, our philosophy, our gastronomy, our techniques in arts and crafts, all are touched by this constant interaction between East and West throughout the centuries. We all come from the same Semite spiritual tradition, sons and daughters of Abraham, people from the *Book*, the Bible, our common heritage. Our apostles, our saints, have walked on this land, our mystical hermits have meditated on our spirituality, lost in solitary ecstasy in the sands and grottoes of its deserts. In destroying, in looting, in dilapidating the natural, archeological, artistic, spiritual resources of this region, we are destroying ourselves, we are returning to obscurantism, to iconoclasm, to barbarity. Daesh send us back our own reflection, as an horrifying image in a distorting mirror. Daesh is the Occident's Doppelgänger, our own dark shadow, our monstrous alter ego. It is the manichean and diabolical soul of our neo-conservative materialistic society that has engendered it. With the Grace of God, as Faust, we must now face it and exorcize it, but not by force and violence, one teaches through example not retaliation. It is through beauty and love, Goethe's *Eternal feminine* : agape, confraternity, openness, generosity of heart and empathy, that peace and harmony shall reign.

As an art historian in London, many of my students at Sotheby's and in my Institute came from the Near and Middle East. These Lebanese, Jordanian, Egyptian, Syrian women were my close friends. Their generosity of heart

and spirit, their joie-de-vivre, their elegance and solar beauty were a great comfort to me after the cruel loss of my husband's demise. I soon had the reputation of having the most beautiful and the most elegant students in London, often mature women. I introduced them to the art treasures of London, Paris, Rome and Florence. In return they invited to the Lebanon. In 2002, I gave a lecture on the influence of Islamic art on Western European art at the American University Museum in Beirut, and at the National Museum of Riyadh in Saudi Arabia. *Beauty shall save the world* wrote Dostoyevsky, for Stendhal it is *The promise of happiness*. We must never forget the mystical verses of the 17th century British Metaphysical poet, John Donne :

*No man is an island,
Entire of itself,
Every man is a piece of the continent,
A part of the main.
If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less.
As well as if a promontory were.
As well as if a manor of thy friend's
Or of thine own were:
Any man's death diminishes me,
Because I am involved in mankind,
And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls;
It tolls for thee.*

I will end with Emile Zola's words in his open letter to the French President Félix Faure in 1898 on the Dreyfus affair : *The truth process has started and nothing shall stop it...I have only one passion, a passion for the light, in the name of long-suffering mankind, who has the right to happiness.*

MONIQUE RICCARDI-CUBITT

7th December 2015